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Yes; metaphysics is a search for truth. Nevertheless, I refuse to be discomfited by the question. Rather, I compose myself to an attitude of celestial calm, and smile in suave Chinese. For it is that kind of a search for the truth which is, like poetry and the other fine arts, autobiographical in method. Of course, it is not all grasped by any one set of memoirs—any more than the truth of human history is all told in one career. Nor is it all told in memoirs writ on a level; a part of it at least is to be found in the business memoranda of the unconsciously reflective plain man, and there is metaphysical significance in the sale of women's wear which, even in war time, can not wholly slump. To be sure, there are philosophers not a few who will cry fie upon such a humanly tainted thing. But my Oriental calm is unsubdued. For I think that the whole world of reason and the truth of all things desirable is embraced within the scope of this metaphysic, which never has been and never will be complete while men continue to live and to discover that they live. Wherefore I draw about me the ample cloak left me by mine uncle Protagoras and go my way in contentment.

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PRAGMATISM AND DEMOCRACY

I

“JUST what philosophy is nobody seems to know, but at any rate a philosopher is one who practises it.” These words, which I have just read from the pages of a current magazine, represent more than a labored effort to be amusing. They express a rather widespread feeling that philosophy has, in the vein of the epigram, suffered much from many practitioners. The truth is that philosophy is not so much in the midair of uncertainty as that a certain *method of philosophizing* has led to obscurity and confusion. And that method is the German method. This is neither a patriotic nor a spiteful remark. It *was* the German method that turned metaphysics into a logic of dialectic and fostered that inordinate preoccupation with abstractions which has subjected philosophy to caricature.

Now I believe that philosophy can be intelligently defined and I also believe very profoundly in its practical value.

In understanding a man's life two questions must always be asked. First, what has he done? And, secondly, why has he done it? To say this is not to say anything that is profound or obscure,

but it is to say something that is important. It is just as important to know what a man's *ideas* are as it is to know his occupation, his bank account, or the color of his eyes. In writing the history of a people it is not enough that you describe their material advancement, their industrial, their social, their scientific, their political achievements; you must also describe their aims, their spirit, their ideals, their national consciousness. For back of statecraft and industries, back of institutions and creeds and policies lie ideas.

That in some sense general ideas exist is a matter beyond dispute. And that in some sense, whether true or false, they exert a tremendous influence on human affairs is likewise a fact that no one doubts; though it is a rather sad fact that they often gain popular acceptance only when they have outlived their usefulness and thus become hindrances rather than aids to progress. And we are for the most part unconscious of this inherited stock of general ideas. They become so integral a part of ourselves and we get so adjusted to them that we scarcely know to what extent we are creatures of tradition. We do not consciously feel the weight of social and intellectual pressure any more than we feel the weight of atmospheric pressure. Our fundamental ways of looking at the world and our deep-seated responses to life are largely matters of inheritance. We think of the world in a certain way because Plato, or St. Thomas Aquinas, or Calvin once thought of it that way. And we do things in a certain way because others before us have done them that way, not that we consciously imitate the past but because the past survives and is conserved in the present.

It is the business of philosophy to discover the leading and controlling ideas that make up our intellectual tradition, to see how they have come about, and to estimate them with special reference to their fitness and applicability to current interests.

The war is the background for most of our thinking. I do not say that the war is a conflict of ideas. The psychology of why men fight certainly involves things more primitive than ideas. But I do say that there is a difference in principle between the general ideas that will prevail if Germany wins and those that will mark the success of the Allies. This we express by saying that the war is a conflict between autocracy and democracy. Just what does this mean?

II

Absolutism is the philosophy of autocracy. It is far beyond the pretension of this essay to describe absolutism as a metaphysical theory, or as an ethical, or even as a political theory. It is sufficient to show how the conception arose and to point out that it is one of

those general ideas that have outlived their usefulness and are now operating as a barrier to progress.

Philosophers during modern times have almost without exception viewed the world after the analogy of mathematics. Descartes, the father of modern philosophy, tells us that in his early life he was much confused and bewildered, he could never be certain of anything; he even went so far as to imagine that some diabolical spirit from the intellectual underworld was all the time deceiving him. Then he came upon the study of mathematics and thereupon, as if by magic, all of his difficulties disappeared. He was so pleased with the nature of mathematical knowledge that he attempted to build a system of universal knowledge after the pattern of mathematics. Spinoza was a mathematician. He made his living grinding lenses, and he wrote his *Ethics* "*de more geometrico*." And Leibnitz discovered the calculus. And Kant mapped out the domain of the inner life after the analogy of Newtonian physics. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were marked by the rapid development of mathematical, physical and mechanical science. No wonder that the modern philosophers saw in mathematics the key to the universe.

The mathematician is a very close and a very precise thinker. Things for him must be just right. They must be very clearly and distinctly defined and very neatly and accurately labeled. His mind just works that way. And that, perhaps, is why he is a mathematician. Now the mathematician is not concerned with circles and triangles as we often think he is. He is concerned with certain abstract relationships which he calls circularity and triangularity. Circles are more or less round, but the mathematician is concerned with perfect roundness, a thing which can once for all be defined and have its formula written. These mathematical objects—universals the logician would call them—are fixed and unalterable things, the same yesterday, to-day and forever.

These conceptions of fixity, rigidity and static perfection got themselves affiliated with medieval logic and the doctrine of the reality of universals. Autocracy was first a logical doctrine. The sovereignty of the universal and the passive submission of the particular were the pattern for feudalism and the hierarchial organization of the medieval church. The Renaissance marked no radical change in man's fundamental way of looking at things. New wine was put into old bottles. Logical autocracy developed into the despotism of science, and the Reign of Law became as inexorable as the fixity of a universal or as the supremacy of the Pope.

Whether this conception of absolutism is valid even within the domain of science is now coming to be an open question. The scientists themselves are telling us that their fundamental assumptions

are quite arbitrary, that they are true within a context, but that they have any universal and absolute validity is entirely beyond positive proof. The status of the concept of absolutism within the realm of science we leave an open question, but when the concept is lifted from its scientific setting and applied to social and political problems the time for revolt is at hand. It is in this way that general ideas, arising in a specific situation and in connection with a definite subject-matter, get themselves abstracted from that original situation and re-applied far and wide to totally different contexts. When such detached ideas work loose from their context they become abstractions. Such logic lifting with its criminal implications has been too often indulged in. The concept of absolutism is just such an abstraction. It arose as a mathematical generalization and has without warrant been carried over and applied to ethics and politics.

A glimpse at the main shifts in the development of modern political theory will show that it has moved within the domain of mathematical and mechanical concepts. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were centuries of political revolution. The concept of natural law and the doctrine of inalienable rights formed the basis of political theory. Milton, Locke and Paine found in the doctrine of natural rights a philosophical justification of revolution. But such a doctrine is but the political counterpart of the reign of law in external nature. It is an eighteenth-century doctrine, symptomatic of the influence of Newton, and expressive of the eighteenth-century glorification of natural reason.

When Bentham substituted the principle of utility for the doctrine of natural rights, thought took a step forward. It involved a complete change in intellectual attitude. Instead of reverting to first principles (abstract rights) it looked forward to consequences. But utilitarianism as a philosophy of social reform was vitiated by a mechanistic psychology. The association of ideas was viewed after the analogy of physical atomism. Now it is true that both the doctrine of natural rights and utilitarianism have helped forward the growth of democracy and liberalism. Each arose in a specific situation and ministered to specific needs, the one justifying revolution and the other encouraging reform.

The rise of the doctrine of evolution seemed to mark a real advance. Here, if anywhere, it would seem that we get away from physics and mechanics. We have done this so far as the facts are concerned, but not at all from the standpoint of their interpretation. The facts of biology were interpreted in terms of mathematical concepts. And such interpretation leads inevitably to the reduction of life to matter. Both Darwin and Spencer reduce change in the last analysis to the mechanical interplay of natural forces.

That is, adjustment is the outcome of natural selection, or, what is the same thing, it is left to the wear and tear of external conflict. But this is still absolutism in disguise. They have only shifted the problem from physical to sociological gravitation, but it is gravitation still, introducing all of the brutality of fate and the constraint of law into the realm of what, but for mechanism, might be human. The economic interpreters of history are doing the same thing. The view here is that those changes and transformations in the structure of society are due to economic forces operating according to external law. Control is external, objective and mechanical. Progress is at the mercy of mechanism.

III

There are times in the progress of intellectual history when man's experience has become so enlarged and expanded that it can no longer be contained within the framework of the existing scheme of concepts. It then becomes necessary to devise new ways of handling it. Such a period, for example, was the Renaissance. The wealth of new experience necessitated the discovery of new ideas as means of expression and interpretation. And such a time, I think, is the present. The last half century has placed at our disposal a vast stock of new material. This is the result largely of the rapid development of the biological sciences. The tremendous influence of the biological sciences at present is comparable to that of the physical and mechanical sciences at the beginning of modern times. But we have been slow to see the intellectual revolution involved in the wide application of the facts of biology. The time has come for a new method in intellectual analysis. Pragmatism is the philosophy which is expressive of such an endeavor.

It is not my purpose to undertake any exposition of pragmatism; it is merely to relate some of its cardinal ideas to the philosophy of democracy. The ideas which pragmatism is clarifying are just the ideas that lend themselves to a definition and restatement of democracy. That democracy needs restatement is, I think, a fact that no one would deny. And until the concept of absolutism is abandoned democracy can not be defined. The absolute sovereignty of the people, the absolute right of the individual—these are but disguised synonyms for despotism. The doctrine of abstract rights only took absolutism out of one sphere and put it in another. There is the danger that we are still doing the same thing. There is the danger that we just patch and tinker with old concepts when the situation demands more radical treatment. There is no use in trying to define democracy in terms of ideas that were framed under the despotic sway of science, and that *at a time* when physics and mechanics were all the science there was.

Absolutism took its cue from mathematics. Pragmatism takes its cue from biology. The biologist has little to say about universals and abstract relationships, but much to say about birth, growth and decay; about movement, change and development; about conflict, struggle and adjustment. The dominating ideas of absolutism are rigidity and fixity. Absolutism is a sort of intellectual caste system. Things are put into certain classes and there they must remain for all eternity. It involves an attitude which in the very nature of the case is uncompromising and unyielding. It is also impersonal, formal and coldly calculating. That such a doctrine makes for system, organization and efficiency can not be denied. But that it makes for tolerance, sympathy or sociability is seriously open to question. The absolutist does not recognize the claims of others. It is not that he has no manners; it is rather that manners cease to have any meaning when set in terms of absolutism. As long as we are dealing with absolutism in any form we are dealing with abstract and impersonal things. It contains in the very nature of the case no basis for human feeling, no considerations of courtesy or cooperation, and no foundation for a philosophy of humanity.

The leading ideas of pragmatism are flexibility, adaptation and compromise. Such concepts involve one at once in a system of relationships. Plato taught long ago that justice is a social matter and that until one has had a little experience he can not tell what it is. That is to say, right, equality, liberty—these are not abstract and absolute things; they imply personal and social relations. Each of us is bound to his fellows by a thousand vital ties. Compromise means a willingness to recognize those ties and to make our plans in the light of that recognition. To introduce compromise as a social ideal is to provide for a philosophy of liberalism. It is also to introduce human feeling into social practise and thereby to provide for a philosophy of humanity. And these are, I dare say, the germinal ideas for a philosophy of democracy.

Many writers have emphasized the facts of conflict and adjustment as descriptive of social phenomena. What they have thus far failed to do has been to locate and define the problem of control. To say that adjustment and compromise are social ideals is not to say enough. What one wants to know is *how* adjustment is effected. Does history present an inevitable evolution beyond human control, or may it be intelligently guided? The Hegelian philosophy of history, Spencerian evolution and the economic interpretation all come to the same point here. They are alike in viewing the function of intelligence as merely descriptive and retrospective. General ideas

are trailers. Intelligence is a sort of thermometer that registers nature's variations.

For pragmatism, control is primarily an affair of the intelligence, and consists in the creation of ends to be realized. This is one of those far-reaching differences between pragmatism and absolutism. It has to do with what may be called the chief end or purpose of development. Now a circle knows perfectly well what it wants; give it consciousness and it will go straight to circularity. But then circularity is there to go to, or what is the same thing, the end pre-exists. It is, as the logicians would say, a particular already subsumed under its universal, and no particular can possibly miss its universal. For the pragmatist the objective is not quite so clear. Where are things headed? you ask the pragmatist. Where do you want them to go? he replies. In themselves they are not headed anywhere. They are, however, in motion and so are bound to get somewhere, but *just* where depends on the creative imagination and the individual effort of human beings. The absolutistic doctrine of objectives is modified by the pragmatist into a doctrine of *projectives*. The creative power of intelligence is the sum and substance of pragmatism, intelligence being defined in the last analysis as the power to create projectives.

It is the creative power of intelligence that saves adjustment from mechanism. It also saves personality. Personality is the kind of a thing which can so easily be lost and which needs "continually to be rediscovered." It is a commonplace to say that absolutism involves the sacrifice of the individual. But has traditional democracy saved the individual? Has it done any more than to give the stronger unlimited and absolute power to slaughter the weaker? Any attempt to define personality in terms of absolutism is doomed to failure.

The war, we say, is a conflict between autocracy and democracy. The formula which is best descriptive of German thought and action is self-development through struggle against opposing forces. Or as expressed in the language of philosophy, "thesis" develops into "synthesis" by overcoming "antithesis." The difference between autocracy and democracy consists in a difference in attitude toward the opposing forces. Does "synthesis" involve an adjustment of conflicting claims, or a complete sacrifice of "antithesis" to "thesis"? Autocracy means uncompromising self-assertiveness; "antithesis" is just so much pathetic material consecrated to the development of "thesis." Fichte's Absolute must needs posit a material world in order to have something to cut its teeth on. Morality demands a "not-self" in order that "self" may grow and expand. The "not-self" derives its right to *be* only in so far as it contributes to the

expansion of the "self." Just that is its function. That is what Santayana calls egotism. The Germans call it romanticism. A better indictment would be romantic criminology.

For democracy "synthesis" means compromise, a willingness to recognize the claims of others, and the exercise of intelligence as a means of adjustment. Not rigidity, sacrifice and absolutism; but flexibility, tolerance, cooperation and compromise are the ideals for an American democracy.

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ON RELIGIOUS VALUES; A REJOINDER

IN an article in this JOURNAL¹ I have pointed out two fallacies that are met with frequently in works in the philosophy of religion, fallacies that I have called the "pragmatic fallacy" and the "fallacy of false attribution." Professor Brightman² and Professor Moore³ have presented criticisms of my views. In answering these criticisms I shall be led into a somewhat detailed discussion of religious values from the point of view of a behaviorist. The views of one who speaks of the meaning and value of God in human behavior are apt to be misunderstood, since religion is a field into which behaviorism has not as yet ventured far. However, since this is a direction in which study will prove fruitful, I shall offer a classification of religious values, which will make clearer what would be an objective, behavioristic account of religious values, and which will also be a part of my answer to my critics.

I

The pragmatic fallacy in the philosophy of religion, as I have defined it, consists of the identification of the value with the truth of religious beliefs, and of the acceptance of those religious beliefs as true which are found to have value. I have insisted that the concepts of truth and of value can not be identified. I have pointed out especially that the survival-value of religious beliefs in human evolution is no evidence of the truth of the beliefs, contrary to the view of James, who was the first to employ Darwinism in defense of religious truth. Further discussion of the meaning of value is obviously needed, but I presupposed among the readers of my article a sufficient familiarity with the developments in the theory of value

¹ *Two Common Fallacies in the Logic of Religion*, this JOURNAL, Vol. XIV., pp. 653-660.

² This JOURNAL, Vol. XV., pp. 71-76.

³ This JOURNAL, Vol. XV., pp. 76-78.